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Key figure of mobility: the exile

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ABSTRACT

Exile is an ancient concept of political displacement expressing the enduring consequences for those affected by it. At least since antiquity exile has been a particular existence but also a form of figuration for those writing about it. This slippage contributed to a widening gap between experiences of exile as a condition of displacement and the qualities the figure symbolises, thus complicating the question of who may be considered exiled under what circumstances. Using this slippage between condition and figure productively, the article first traces the figure through Edward Said and outlines exile's relation to other key figures of mobility and diaspora. A second analytical compares this figure to anthropological research and to the particular case of Palestinians who live as exiles 'at home'. Once reinstated as a condition of displacement for the anthropology of mobility, exile illuminates the subjective and temporal dimensions of political displacement and its enduring aftermath. It helps us to grasp the myriad processes by which people are excluded, allowed, and forced to move, while also illustrating the forced movement of boundaries and political projects across and around people.

KEYWORDS: Exile, Mobility, Displacement, Identity, Edward Said.

Introduction

Exile is an ancient concept expressing a form of political banishment and the enduring consequences of forced displacement for those affected by it. Despite this long-standing history social anthropology has only rarely engaged with exile conceptually. Within its European context, exile was originally associated with banishment from Greek or Roman city-states. Also in the Mesopotamia of biblical times, exile was a recognised form of punishment: the enforced expulsion from the natal community that is exemplified by the 'captivity of the Jews in Babylon, the most publicised exile in history' (Firth 1978: 247). The fates of Dante in the 14th century and of Napoleon in the 19th century further illustrate the importance of exile as a form of expulsion throughout European history. In this sense, exile has been fundamentally a matter of forced location, or a state of being displaced 'outside of the soil' (Starn 1982: 1). At the same

time, most prominent exiles – from the Roman poet Ovid to Napoleon and Edward Said – were also political figures displaced from hostile regimes or colonialism. In exile, these figures ‘express their discontent’ as a way to reconstitute their broken lives (Shahidian 2000: 71), often by defining themselves ‘as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people’ despite feeling in-between (Said 2001: 177). Edward Said may be the best known ‘voice’ of exile understood in this sense: a secular political figure with a complicated relation to dominant ideologies who was at times opposed by Zionists and Palestinian nationalists alike (Said 1998).

Exemplary for writers in exile, Edward Said represents its experience and a particular figuration of exile from an emic and auto-biographical position. Exile has always been a form of existence but also a form of figuration for those writing about it, as Said suggests: ‘exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience’ (2001: 173). Much of this ‘thinking’ about the condition has informed the figure that now represents exile as an influential metaphor in scholarly debates.

There is thus a widening gap between experiences of exile as a condition of displacement and some of the qualities the figure has come to symbolise, with consequences for questions of who may be considered exiled under what circumstances. As singular figures, exiled writers long played a central role in shaping the public and scholarly perception of this complex entanglement. They have come to symbolise a very particular kind of figuration: exile as ‘the displacement of high culture and the most pure of literary heroes’ who live as characters in their own ‘transplanted epic’ (Redfield and Tomášková 2003: 74). When Salman Rushdie describes himself as looking at a photograph of an old family house in his office, he concludes in the romanticising style typical for literary exile: ‘It’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time (...) an imaginary homeland’ (2012: 9). In a similar vein, Joseph Brodsky aestheticized exile as ‘the premonition’ of his fate

‘in book form’ (Brodsky 1991: 6). These aestheticized metaphors have made exile a difficult concept to work with.

Said’s memoirs and conceptual writings illustrate how widespread understandings of exile, as a ‘concept-metaphor’ (Moore 2004), have been shaped by exiles’ own emic positions. The ‘figure’ is essentially a personified ‘concept-metaphor’ characterised by shifting meanings and a tension between universal claims and particular contexts (Moore 2004: 74), between emic perspectives and contextualised experience. Using the analytical productivity of this tension, a critical analysis of exile as a figure allows us to access the underlying ideological formations and their possible contestations (Barker and Lindquist 2009: 36; Williams 1976). The objective is to generate new insights about exile’s analytical purchase for social anthropology in general, and the anthropology of mobility in particular. As part of a special issue on ‘Key Figures of Human Mobility’, this inquiry joins a wider scholarly effort in anthropology that ‘takes on’ mobility from critical new perspectives (Salazar and Smart 2011; Salazar 2013; Hackl et al. 2015).

Aiming to reinstate exile conceptually as a particular condition of displacement, this article will first trace the figure through Edward Said and other influential writers that have shaped it. Departing from this analytical ground, I will explore how the use of this particular key figure has contributed to social theory, and by extension, how this theorisation compares to the contemporary ethnographic study of exile as a condition of displacement. This dialogue between figure and condition will flow in two directions: the critical analysis of the figure and its evolution lays the groundwork for theorising about the condition, while ethnographic comparison and a review of anthropological approaches throws up questions about the qualities that the figure embodies. As part of this comparison, I will also draw on my own ethnographic research on Palestinians in Israel, whose case is insightful because they live as ‘exiles at home’.

A double-faced figure

There has been a literature of exile since antiquity, and so it was in language, at least, that exiles could ‘plot a better future’ (Starn 1982: 24). Through their ‘plots’ these exiled writers shaped literary images that became far greater than themselves. The genealogy of the figure stretches well back into antiquity (see Gaertner 2007; Starn 1982), although postcolonial writers exerted a particular influence on the contemporary anthropology of displacement. Especially Edward Said emerged as a foremost ‘explicator and representative’ of exile (Karmi 2000: 310). Yet even he seemed unsure whether the condition he called exile resulted from displacement or temper, which underlines the autobiographical moorings of generalisations attached to the figure:

For as long as I can remember, I had allowed myself to stand outside the umbrella that shielded or accommodated my contemporaries. Whether this was because I was genuinely different, objectively an outsider, or because I was temperamentally a loner I cannot say. (Said 1998)

Despite its personal colouring, the Saidian figure of exile travelled into theories about the wider condition, creating a problematic tension between person and experience. As Said transformed the ‘unsituated orphanhood of exile into a respectable state’ (Iskandar and Rustom 2010: 7), the figure reflected his class and identity, as well as his gender (Kaplan 1987: 31; Kay 1988). Moreover, Said figured the exile as an ‘apogee’ free of religious attachments positioned far away from the centre of society (Iskandar and Rustom 2010: 5). It is clear, however, that not everyone who experiences exile is also an ‘exile’ in this sense. The gap between figure and condition creates tension between universal tropes and particular contexts, between literary metaphors and social anthropology.

The 'trope of exile' became a 'potent metaphor' for the distinctive, the disjunctive and the alienated, particularly within cultural and literary studies (Everett and Wagstaff 2004: x), but also in anthropology and sociology (e.g. Clifford 1994). Here an 'aesthetic' project advanced the image of an elevated 'class of exile': seemingly elite, cosmopolitan, intellectual, and privileged (Lumsden 1999: 31-32). This figure lends itself to all sorts of experiences, including writers of Euro-American modernity who invoked exile to express their escape from the nation-state into the cosmopolitan city (Kaplan 1996: 30).

As Said (2001: 185) exemplifies, exile is an intellectual and de-territorialized home: 'exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience'; they are not interested in holding territory. Exile has always turned people into seemingly rootless travellers, but such mobility has essentially been a result of exclusion: those ejected from Italian cities 'were pushed and pulled', wandering like mountain people between high-country and plain (Starn 1982: 4). This notion of rootlessness fit well into celebrations of mobility and cosmopolitanism that came to characterise figurations of exile in the postcolonial European or North American metropolis. However, this figure also has a 'second face': one that remains desperately rooted in the lost homeland, politically banished, immobilised and entrapped.

Even Said suffered rather than celebrated the 'multiple ruptures' of countries, cities, abodes, languages and environments' (Said 2000: 217). Born in Jerusalem, he and his parents soon moved to Cairo where he attended prestigious schools. As a Non-Egyptian and Palestinian with American citizenship from his father, who had served in the AEF during the First World War, Said developed 'an unsettled sense of many identities' in conflict with each other (Said 2000: 5; 61). Suffering from multiple dislocations between Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon and eventually the United States, Said described exile as an 'unsurmountable' rift between the homeland and new territory, as well as a rupture in time between a lost past and a difficult present (Said 2000: 19). This rupture remains central in Said's memoirs, in which he remembers celebrating his 12th

birthday in the Jerusalem of 1947 before his family left ‘for the very last time December that year’ (Said 2000: 108). It was less than a year before Israeli statehood and the mass displacement of Palestinians in the ‘catastrophe’ of 1948. Crucially for Said, exile was not a privilege or a matter of choice: ‘you are born into it, or it happens to you’ (Said 2001: 184). This ‘second face’ of the figure expresses the destructive aspects of forced displacement and a liminal state of drifting between different spatial and temporal moorings.

The French-Algerian sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad (1996) mirrors Said’s troubled state of entrapment in-between, suggesting that ‘exiles live in limbo between two worlds’. He framed such double consciousness as double absence and impotence: a split ‘two-ness’ of being a foreigner in the home- and the host country, stuck in the false temporariness of the condition without achieving permanence (Dickson 1992: 300-1; Massey 2006), left with little opportunity to resist (Noiriel 2006: 109). The ‘second face’ of exile expresses the ‘tragedy’ behind the cosmopolitan surface and the stigma within the ‘hybridity’. Said (2000: 86-7) described the latter as an act of concentrating ‘the whole lot into one unpleasant steel container, into which I was placed, like Jell-O poured into a mold’. However, hybrid exiles’ identity may be figured, they are frequently pressured to ‘annul’ their non-transferrable and unnaturalisable parts (Adorno 2006). Said himself concealed his ‘strange’ identity as a student in the United States, where he resolved to becoming ‘like the others, as anonymous as possible’ (2000: 83).

However, the political character of exile makes such detachment unsustainable. Rising Palestinian nationalism after the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 awakened Said from his state of dissociation, although he continued to feel in-between ‘opposed constituencies, one Western, the other Arab’ (Said 1998). Opposed to militarism and ‘armed struggle’, Said’s political displacement was twofold: he opposed Israel and its American backing but simultaneously rejected the dominant ideology of Palestinian struggle through which ‘return’ from exile was framed. As the underlying causes for exile are political, so are many of its consequences. This

includes the ‘impossibility of return’ so prominent in the figure, describing the nostalgia of return as a source of frustration (Sayad 1996: 12). Rushdie (2012: 12) writes that ‘the past is a country from which we all have emigrated’, but essentially, this past is stolen by the political and humanitarian consequences of war, colonialism and totalitarianism. Specific political conditions create the circumstances that lead to prolonged exile and very often, it is political circumstances that prevent ‘return’ and maintain exclusion.

Once we accept that exile is a contested conceptual space, the two faces of exile must not look into opposite directions. Taken together, their dialectic relationship is analytically productive by simultaneously expressing multi-dimensional *and* split identity, mobility *and* confinement, displacement *and* a concern with emplacement. Given that metaphors of travel and displacement have long been used in ways that obscure rather than illuminate differences (Kaplan 1996), I will now bring exile into dialogue with other key figures of mobility and ‘diaspora’. This will provide further analytical clarity about the differential registers of related concept-metaphors.

Exile and its boundaries

In the abstract sense of the figure, Said’s exile binds a set of understandings about displacement that is very different from refugees, for example, who have not been ascribed the freedom and hybridity of exile. The figure of the refugee is ‘an epistemic object in construction’ and connotes ‘a bureaucratic and international humanitarian realm’ (Malkki 1995: 497; 513). Managed, classified and regulated as an ‘undesirable outcast’ (Agier 2011), the ‘refugee’ entails a legal dimension and indicates impermanency, while ‘exile’ features temporal depth and a concern with ‘integration’ (Peteet 2007: 633-636). According to Said, exile is rooted in an age-old

practice of banishment that leads into a solitary life as an outsider, while the modern refugee suggests an anonymous collective ‘of innocent and bewildered people’ (2001: 181).

Seemingly at the other end of the mobility-spectrum, the ‘nomad’ is figured as a transgressor that challenges state-control and embodies freedom (see Engebrigtsen in this issue). Exiles transgress boundaries too but remain rooted in political displacement and forced expulsion. The frequently ‘forced’ character of exile is also invoked to suggest its difference to the ‘voluntary’ expatriate, who may suffer solitude and estrangement, but not the rigid proscriptions of exile (Said 2001: 181). Given the emphasis on *forced* displacement in exile, how is it different from the ‘forced migrant’?

Calling the twenty-first century the ‘century of the migrant’, Thomas Nail (2015: 1-3) writes that this figure is the one ‘least defined by its being and place’ and more by its ‘movement’ to or from. Actual movement on routes and across terrains remains central to the figure of the forced migrant (Gill et al 2011: 308). ‘Exile’, however, refers to the critical moment of displacement in the past, suggesting that one can be *in* exile but not *in* ‘migrancy’ in the same sense. However, if forced migrants remain in their host country permanently their movement lies equally in the past. Consequently, migrants must not be figured as shattered fragments of ‘emigration’, ‘movement’ or ‘immigration’; they are all mutually implicated (Sayad 2004). The forced and immobile quality of exile goes back to its historical sense of banishment to particular places, either as forced confinement within one particular place or as the expulsion from one place into the space outside of it (Starn 1982: 8). As a prolonged condition, the distinguishing feature of exile is not forced movement, however, but the political nature of such ‘banishment’, forced or otherwise. Offering subjective and temporal depth alongside this political dimension, exile also adds important analytical qualities to the concept-metaphor ‘diaspora’, which covers an ever broadening set of populations dispersed in space (Brubaker 2005: 3). As a concept, ‘diaspora’ was itself almost absent from the social sciences lexicon before the 1960s and has

only become an all-purpose word in the 1980s (Dufoix 2008: 19). Along the way it replaced 'exile' in the media and in scholarly publications. Stéphane Dufoix (2008: 30) argues that this had particular reasons: the influence of theories of globalization and postmodernism since the 1980s and the creation of publication sites labelled 'diaspora'. Thus, diaspora has been generalized as the 'creative and hybrid mergings of multiple cultural contexts and places' and encompasses what were once called exiles (Petee 2007: 629; 637). This encompassment silenced exile amid the growing importance of flows and transnationalism (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Rapport and Dawson 1998), and an overall 'mobility turn' (e.g. Urry 2000; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007), which figured movement as an empowering normality opposite to place attachment (Salazar and Smart 2011: i-ii). Meanwhile, diaspora came to symbolise the 'resources for emergent "postcolonialisms"' that transcend the ruptures caused by structures of domination (Clifford 1994: 302). The 'productivity' of diaspora also travelled into anthropology, where 'transmigrants' linked their country of origin and their countries of settlement across cultural and political borders (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: ix). But the trend was particularly strong in cultural studies, where the diaspora-experience transcended essentialism with heterogeneity by suggesting an 'identity' that lives through difference in hybridity (Hall 1990: 235). This re-definition of displacement as productive, hybrid and transnational produced what Brubaker (2005: 1) calls the "'diaspora" diaspora', namely the dispersion of its meanings in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.

In retrospect, the rise of diaspora studies expelled particularly the 'tragic' dimensions of exile: the political exclusion and the limitations of hybridity amid unbridgeable rifts and enduring immobilisation. This dimension also includes the 'lost context' of a history of war and colonialism that 'tore away people from their homes' before they came into the metropolises of the former coloniser (Axel 2004: 28). Exile re-introduces this context of violent political displacement at a time when the celebrations of unrooted cosmopolitanisms are challenged by

the ‘continuing primacy of the state in determining the nature of mobility’ (Peteet 2007: 643). Likewise, the displaced of the early 20th century did not become ‘homeless’, ‘stateless’ and ‘rightless’ by accident, but as a result of ‘some unredeemable stupid fatality’ and systematic political exclusion (Arendt 1961: 267-277).

Exile is a condition that links displaced subjectivity with such larger political forces, including the ‘violent dismembering’ of displaced individuals who are excluded from their countries of origin and destination (Coutin 2016: 207). Exile’s ‘solitude outside the group’ (Said 2001: 177) and diaspora’s ‘groupness’ (Brubaker 2005: 12) are deeply interrelated not opposite dimensions here: ethnic groups can form a diaspora under collective banishment from their homeland and subsequently experience the prolonged condition of exile individually. Scholars commonly used ‘diaspora’ to refer to particular groups of people, such as Jews, people of African origin, or Palestinians (Dufoix 2008: 19). Seemingly unhappy about approaching ‘diasporas’ as bounded groups, Brubaker (2005: 13) suggests using the term as an attribute, as in diasporic stances, or practices. As an essential feature of the human experience of displacement, the condition of exile can follow forced migration, manifest itself among refugees and become a key component of ‘diasporic stances’.

Displaced subjectivities: exile in anthropology

Under influence of the figure’s metaphors anthropologists have often used exile to express the ‘aesthetic possibilities of displacement’ (Malkki 1995). They even invoke it to express their own liminal state. Claude Lévi-Strauss was of course quite literally ‘in exile’ in New York, but other anthropologists framed their status as exile too. Just like resigning to life in another land symbolises the loss of virtuous exile, permanently settling in a field site has been framed as a

loss of ethnographic authority, as if neither figure can 'go native' (Redfield and Tomášková 2003: 77). Such comparisons aestheticizes exile beyond its context of displacement in problematic ways.

Despite these 'aesthetic' applications, exile has also served analytical purpose in the anthropology of migration, displacement and diaspora. Indeed, where anthropologists invoke exile it is often in relating the complex subjectivities of the displaced to the political dimension. More particularly still, 'exile' appears where the interrelations of homeland and a new life become meaningful in political aspirations. For example, Riaño-Alcalá (2008: 15) invokes exile in her research on refugees and internally displaced Colombians as a way to express questions of definition: 'the experience of fleeing one's home and becoming an exile represents a forced individual and collective project of redefining one's place in the world and one's relationship with the past'. In a similar vein, McCranahan (2005: 573; 577) explains that much of Tibetan exile life is ordered by the goals of remaining traditional yet moving forward, the maintaining of cultural traditions but also the political quest of 'regaining Tibet'. Exile expresses how the political aspects of displacement manifest themselves subjectively and temporally. As such, it saturates classificatory terms such as 'refugee' or 'migration' with temporal depth, political agency and deeper subjective meaning. At the same time, these terms often replace exile because a set of transnational and national legal-political practices and power structures have redefined exiles as a 'new kind of person': a refugee, refugee claimant, or undocumented or illegal migrant (Riaño-Alcalá 2008: 13). As Wise (2004: 25) writes in *Embodying Exile*, the East Timorese came to Australia 'as refugees' and then became active as 'members' of the Timorese 'diaspora'. She invokes exile, however, to say that 'questions of embodiment and affect are central to the formation of their collective identities in exile', that their independence campaign created a very specific 'collective identity oriented toward exile' (37). Although refugee-status is also discussed in relation to complex identity dynamics (e.g. Peteet 1996),

anthropological research tends to invoke 'exile' to express certain essences and subjective dilemmas of the displaced condition and its political dimensions. Acknowledging that research must 'mend the broken threads and put together the shattered fragments' of the displaced experience (Sayad 2004), I consider exile to be one such thread.

Writing about Cuban 'revolutionaries', Berg (2009: 276) only classifies the first generation as exiles because only they harbour 'hopes of returning' to a post-Castro Cuba four decades later: 'they and other exiles rendered their past unequivocal. Leaving Cuba became the moment against which the rest of their lives was measured and understood.' This first generation 'qualifies' as exiles because they experienced and continue to invoke the rupture as a defining element. Their lost homeland is 'a central feature of self-representation' (Berg 2009: 275). The past 'rupture' symbolises the essence of political banishment and inspires political memory and ideologies of return. Time is an important feature of exile if the rupture remains central precisely because mobility towards the homeland remains restricted. As Coutin writes in *Exiled Home* (2016: 7): 'the past haunts the present' like archaeology, excavating the historical layers that underlie current realities. Anthropologists invoke exile to express this temporal relevance of displacement, as in the case of 'life-stories' of Holocaust survivors (Rylko-Bauer 2005), or when analysing 'narratives of exile' among El Salvadorians in Sweden, which express the enduring 'circumstances of life in exile' (Eastmond 1996: 248). That 'life in exile' is inherently political becomes clear in the case of the 'Exile-Nation-State' or 'the exile government in Dharamsala' (e.g. McGranahan 2005). This widespread usage refers broadly to the displacement or constitution of a political movement outside of their home-country. And in the exiled Chilean resistance movement of the 1970s and 1980s, political displacement also expressed core symbols of life and death, an exile that was 'symbolically depicted as a liminal period of struggle and suffering, a social death that could be overcome only by returning home: return was transcendence and the way to reclaim life' (Eastmond 1996: 247).

This sense of social death goes back to earlier meanings of exile as political banishment as an alternative to actual death by penalty. Raymond Firth (1978) discussed banishment among the Polynesian Tikopia, surprised that anthropologists had devoted little conceptual attention to exile. He goes on to make an interesting distinction, arguing that banishment to nearby land is a form of exile while the often deadly banishment to sea is not: 'it represented no alternative dwelling, and had a finality which obviated almost any hope of return' (252). This sense of 'hope', however unrealistic, is central to most interpretations of exile, as is the concern with re-settlement and emplacement.

These examples show well for what analytical purpose anthropologists invoke exile. Broadly speaking, they do so where life *after* the 'rupture' of displacement gains deeper subjective and political meaning as an enduring experienced condition; a liminal state in spatial, temporal and identity-terms with often restricted mobility. It is the political dimension of 'banishment' and the particular political awareness displacement inscribes into prolonged exile which is most defining of this condition. Realising that there is a largely 'untested faith' that the challenges facing displaced people are largely due to their physical displacement (Landau 2014: 143), the following section offers an ethnographically informed discussion about whether one can be in exile despite still being on the homeland, whether one can be politically displaced without moving 'elsewhere'.

Taking Said 'home'

I will now take Said's particular figure into the context of contemporary Palestinians to learn more about exile's significance as a condition of political displacement. With the Arab-Israeli war and Israel's creation in 1948 some 750.000 Palestinians fled or were forced into neighbouring Arab countries (Peteet 2007: 627). Only about 150-160,000 Palestinians managed

to stay in or return to the newly formed State of Israel (Robinson 2013: 1; Pappé 2011). Was this the beginning of their exile at home?

As ‘citizen strangers’ in a settler state (Robinson 2013: 3), their case challenges the idea that exiles are ‘exiles’ because they are far away from the homeland, and that this is why they are ‘out of place’. Criticising this emphasis of distance, Peteet (2007) argues that ‘proximate exiles’ may be a more appropriate term for displaced Palestinians than ‘diaspora’ (632). This ‘proximate’ attends to the fact that many still live within the borders of historic Palestine or in neighbouring Arab states.

As a condition of political displacement that captures ‘the ever-expanding variety of mobilities and displacements’ (Peteet 2007: 643), exile can also result from the forced movement of a foreign state onto another people’s homeland. It casts a rift between people’s identity and the (national and cultural) character of the political space that surrounds them. This form of political displacement is similar to the case of dispossessed tribal people in confined reserves described by Clifford (1994: 309). Despite still being on the same land, they remained oriented towards a lost or alienated home defined as aboriginal, which is nevertheless ‘outside’ and hence exiled from the surrounding nation-state. A similar sense of displaced belonging is also prominent in the Palestinian ‘politics of indigeneity’ within Israel, which reframes the struggle away from demanding equal rights towards historical justice as a form of ‘return’ that should revolutionize the political status quo (Jamal 2011). Mirroring Said’s theorisation of exile, the condition of Palestinians in Israel includes a series of tensions between mourning the past and coping with the present, between dissociation and political participation. This tension is particularly strong in the supposedly ‘liberal’ metropolis, which is so prominently celebrated in figurations of exile. Indeed, Tel Aviv is not New York: Edward Said was fond of New York because it encouraged the changing of identity and allowed him to ‘be different things’ (Ali 2006: 119); but in the metropolis of Tel Aviv, ‘being different things’ is severely limited for the Palestinians

I researched among, who worked, studied or lived in this city. They may well enjoy occasional urban anonymity but their efforts to be included are paralleled by recurring stigmatisation and pressures to accommodate and annul their identity. They must often resign to being a de-politicised and de-historicised person, a so-called ‘good Arab’, to cite a phrase employers and landlords in Israel often use. While they can never fully be visibly *who* they are as Palestinians in Tel Aviv, they feel pressure to define *what* they are in ways directly related to displacement: having been exiled ‘at home’, Palestinian identity and history has been displaced from the Israeli state and nation.

Ironically, ‘return’ is impossible despite still living within the boundaries of historic Palestine: when the Tel Aviv University student Wasseem was still at school, he and his classmates researched their family roots. Most Jewish pupils traced their origins back to Europe, Poland, or Middle Eastern countries like Iraq. But Wasseem traced his roots back to Lubia: a Palestinian village depopulated in 1948 and subsequently destroyed. Its remains within Israel are a short car-drive away but it is a lost past impossible to return to. Despite not being exiled in geographic terms, people can be politically displaced *from* much of what once defined this ‘homeland’. Some Palestinians who became Israeli citizens were literally displaced ‘internally’. However, I argue that exile has had a material and political dimension for those who stayed put, exemplified by the forceful destruction of cultural and political ownership over the homeland, the removal of villages and families, the expropriation of property, as well as the dilemma of being an outsider ‘at home’. Their exile is a ‘condition’ that results from the forceful encompassment by a foreign regime and leads to a series of tensions that revolve around central components of their identity, power, and mobility. A principle of political elimination characterises settler colonial states like Israel and this also has ‘positive effects’ such as limited inclusion and citizenship (Wolfe 2006: 388). It is not blunt expulsion but the destructive nature of their incorporation into a foreign political regime that defines their sense of banishment. Such

encompassment is hierarchical and ‘implies that all forms of alterity which cannot be encompassed are regarded as a threat’ (Sjørølev 2004: 90). It is political banishment by ways of hierarchical incorporation, including the rank-ordering of legitimate history: a history of colonialism to which some people assert a privileged relation, while others are denied *their* history (Wolf 2010).

As for mobility, the Palestinian case also illustrates that homelands are not simply ‘lost’. Return is ‘prevented’ on political grounds (Said 2001: 181). As Kelly (2004: 95-97) writes on displaced Palestinians who return on ‘tourist visas’ and face new threats of expulsion if they overstay: ‘the issue confronting displaced persons is not so much that they have moved, but rather that they are unable to move unproblematically or go back to where they have come from’. Moreover, the condition of exile suffers from multiple forms of confinement, not only with regard to ‘return’. Said (2000: 118) described how security-officials singled out his mother on international travels because she only held a so-called ‘Palestine-Passport’ and later a ‘Laissez-Passer’; stateless for a long time, exile turned her into a politically banished, legally liminal and inherently ‘suspicious’ traveller; ‘homeless’, ‘stateless’, and ‘rightless’ in the sense of Hannah Arendt (1961: 267). Palestinian citizens of Israel have Israeli passports, but they are immobilised as ‘suspicious’ at transition points, in public transport or at the airport in very similar ways (Hackl 2016). Israel polices their mobility as people belonging to suspect social categories (Shamir 2005). Some even argue that the Palestinians who remained in Israel after 1948 became ‘stateless’ citizens because the medium through which their marginalised existence was maintained is citizenship itself (Molavi 2014, 5–7). Exemplified by conditional citizenship and limited political membership, law can fix origin and nationality in exclusive ways; it ‘has the power to pull individuals to particular territories, to make them disappear from others, and even to place them outside of nations altogether, thus exiling them from “homes” in multiple senses’ (Coutin 2016: 7).

In this sense, such multiple exile from ‘homes’ also results from the forced redrawing of boundaries around and between people, creating a tension between senses of identity and solidarity on the one hand, and political boundaries on the other. As Aida, a Palestinian-Israeli student in Tel Aviv, told me at the peak of the 2014 Gaza-Conflict: ‘I can’t stand this duality anymore. My good friends are in Gaza, locked in and fearing for their lives, but the people around me support the army that bombards them. (...) I live on my homeland while the country is not mine.’ Limited mobility within or towards their homeland is not only a result of past uprooting but essentially a product of ongoing practices of confinement and exclusion. Consequently, one can be ‘out of place’ (Said 2000) without necessarily being far away, whereby ‘homeland’ is politically prevented and hierarchically encompassed.

Exile as a key figure of mobility

This article re-examined exile in order to generate new insights about its analytical purchase for the anthropology of mobility and displacement. Departing from Said’s figure, I explored the slippage between figure and condition and discussed exile’s relation to other key figures and the concept of ‘diaspora’. As a second analytical move, I reviewed the use of exile in current anthropological research and took Said’s figure ‘home’ into the context of contemporary displaced Palestinians.

As an experienced condition, exile expresses the enduring aftermath of political displacement in people’s lives more generally, and the impact of such displacement on political subjectivity, identity and mobility in particular. Political displacement may be best described as a ‘tectonic’ sliding of ‘plates’ that reshuffles the relationship between the ‘internal’ and ‘external’, between subjective belonging and the political character of place, as well as between past and present, in ways that are experienced as a series of unresolved tensions. This shift can result from forced

human mobility, but also from the forced movement of boundaries and political projects across and around people. It may even result from self-banishment if individuals choose exile because of their opposition to political regimes, whether fuelled by fear or coercion. As a condition, 'exile' expresses additional analytical qualities that go beyond figures as personalised or objectified concept-metaphors. All politically displaced may end up experiencing the condition of exile without necessarily *being* 'exiles' in the sense of the figure.

In moving gradually from the figure to a theorisation of the condition, I tried to bring the two 'faces of exile' into productive dialogue. It is the tension between cosmopolitanism and fixation, between mobility and confinement, that makes exile analytically insightful at a time when critical perspectives on mobility are 'reconciling rootedness and cosmopolitanism' (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013: 197). Exile's plural subjectivities may be productive but are frequently stigmatised; political displacement causes suffering but also leads to a new life with new political opportunities, however limited they may be. Moreover, it became clear that exiles are not irreversibly banished from their homeland because they had to leave, but because they are prevented from moving back, certainly in time, but frequently also in space with the help of political and legal exclusion. Being in exile is a result of past displacement but also a product of ongoing forms of confinement and restriction. Blending immobilisation with a sense of subjective flexibility, exile overcomes the dichotomy between metaphors of 'travel' and 'displacement'. It offers an analytical alternative to explore a condition of displacement beyond the legal-political classifications of 'refugees' and 'immigrants'. While one can notice 'the relative absence of the refugee or the forced migrant in social theory' (Gill et al 2011: 304), exile emerges as conceptually compelling but is hard to find in the anthropological literature.

Hoping to counter the chronic neglect of exile's analytical value, I hope that this discussion will engender renewed interest in engaging with exile as a condition of political displacement in social anthropology. This condition binds the subjective and socio-political dimensions of

displacement conceptually. It opens up a new perspective on the interrelations between the subjective and political dimensions of displacement and the myriad practices that include and exclude, mobilise and immobilise people. Exile encourages a critical analysis of the identity-related processes by which people are bounded, allowed, and forced to move, while simultaneously emphasizing the forced movement of boundaries and political projects across people.

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